

Wethersfield Parks and Recreation Advisory Board  
Harbor Management Commission  
Minutes - Thursday, October 27, 2011

The meeting was held at the William J. Pitkin Community Center and called to order by Chairperson Tom Ragonese at 7:15 p.m. Members present were Chairperson Tom Ragonese, Dan Silbo, Tom Pentalow and Richard Lepore. Also present were Mike Hurley, Council Liaison, Kathleen Bagley, Director of Parks and Recreation, Marty Sitler, Recreation Supervisor and Charlie Forsdick, Acting Harbormaster.

A. Public Comments.

Chairperson Ragonese opened the public information session on the Draft Harbor Management Plan and welcomed about 25 members of the public to the Advisory Parks and Recreation Board/Harbor Management Commission meeting. He introduced Kathy Bagley, Parks and Recreation Director, and asked her to explain why the town established a Harbor Management Commission. Ms. Bagley told the audience that this commission was established to put a Harbor Management Plan in place and oversee the operations of the Wethersfield Cove. With this commission and plan, the town has a much stronger standing and can receive greater support when working with State and Federal agencies like the Army Corps of Engineers, State Department of Transportation and the State Department of Environmental Protection. It will demonstrate the town's commitment to managing and protecting the resources of the Wethersfield Cove and greatly enhance the town's opportunities to receive financial support (grants) and other support for maintaining and improving our valuable asset and resource.

Ms. Bagley introduced Charlie Forsdick and noted that he is the acting Harbormaster. He explained that he has been working with the Parks and Recreation staff as a volunteer maritime consultant on the development of the plan. Ms. Bagley gave a brief presentation on the draft plan. She explained that the draft plan follows the State of Connecticut Model Municipal Harbor Management Plan and this draft incorporated information unique to Wethersfield. Staff researched other community plans including the Town of Chester and the City of Middletown. The plan describes existing conditions at the Cove, identifies harbor management issues and goals, and establishes policies for use in administering the plan. Ms. Bagley noted that this draft plan was made available to individuals prior to the meeting. Copies are available at the back of the room. She then briefly reviewed the plan. (Attached to minutes)

Chairperson Ragonese opened the meeting to questions and comments from the public.

1. Ballou Tooker asked for clarification on people living aboard their boats. Mr. Forsdick provided further information to him.
2. Roger Fabian asked about public access to the area and had a concern with privacy issues and mooring rights for the residents bordering the Cove. Mr. Forsdick explained that homeowners bordering the Cove had riparian rights to allow them to moor their boats and people could not trespass on their property.
3. Steve Randall asked questions about various aspects of the plan and gave his copy of the plan with markups to staff for review and inclusion in the draft plan. He talked about riparian rights, the Army Corps of Engineers dredging the channel and fees for boaters.
4. Lee Standish was concerned about the language in the ordinance establishing the Harbor Management Commission as it applied to the areas under their jurisdiction. The language reads "The Harbor Management Commission shall have jurisdiction within the area located in or contiguous to the waters of the town as delimited by the jurisdiction of the Town Council and bounded by the projection of the boundary line of neighboring towns." He asked for clarification on the word "contiguous". Staff will review this concern. Mr. Forsdick suggested that this word may not be appropriate in this situation.
5. Ed Mitchell discussed items #13 &14. How will the town improve the water quality and provide more access for fishing? Ms. Bagley explained that these items are goals and the town will continue to work with the MDC for better water quality. The new dock plan calls for leaving one of the old docks for fishing.
6. Dennis Walter suggested replacing the words jet ski with personal watercraft.

7. Dan DeCourcy asked about the town maintaining existing facilities at the Cove. He does not feel the town takes care of the Cove, empties garbage cans when full, or is a good neighbor.
8. Joe Segart asked about information on the high water mark and who determines it. Mr. Forsdick explained that this mark is set by the Army Corps of Engineers. It is not influenced by flood conditions.
9. Jim Harris asked if the plan will be reviewed on an annual basis. Chairperson Ragonese explained that it is one of the responsibilities of the Harbor Management Commission to review the plan annually.
10. Gail Fabian asked if lights would be installed for night activities. Ms. Bagley reported that no lights are planned for the park.

Residents asked about more information on the pump out cart approved by the town for the Cove boating operation. Ms. Bagley explained that this cart is a portable pump out for boats sanitary waste. The cart will be located near the attendant's shed and will be chained and fenced if necessary. The cart will be available on weekends for use by boaters. The cart will be cleaned out by a contractor as often as necessary. Other residents asked that the language be cleaned up around the biological habitat information and to include information on paddle sports, ADA access and fishing.

Mr. Forsdick explained the work currently being undertaken by the Army Corps of Engineers to dredge the channel. Ms. Bagley provided information on the grant the town submitted to the State and Federal government for the new docks and additional moorings in the Cove. At this time, 8:40 p.m., residents had no further questions.

Chairperson Ragonese thanked the public for their participation in this meeting. Staff will take all the input and develop a second draft to be reviewed by the Harbor Management Commission. The draft will then be sent to the State for their review and approval and finally to the Town Council for their approval.

B. Minutes – September 22, 2011.

Dan Silbo moved to approve the minutes of September 22, 2011. The motion was seconded by Tom Pentalow and approved unanimously.

C. Monthly Report – September 2011.

The Monthly Report was reviewed by Board members.

D. Letters and Announcements.

E. Old Business.

F. New Business.

G. Board Member Comments.

1. Basketball Registration.

Tom Pentalow reported that signups have started. They have approximately 500 students signed up from second grade to high school.

2. Soccer fields.

Dan Silbo reported that the fields have taken a beating with the weather and use. Ms. Bagley explained that the maintenance staff will overseed and roll the fields to get them ready for spring use.

3. Lights at High School Football Field.

Dan Silbo reported that many people are attending the night games for high school sports. He received a report from a PTA meeting that the entrance area was dark for a game. Ms. Bagley will check into this issue. There is additional lighting in that area and it is possible it was not turned on. She will remind high school staff about the location of light switches for night games. Ms. Bagley reported that she had a request from the Eagles Youth Football program to hold a night game. She explained that she did not grant the request because the town gave the high school the use of the lights for this season. At the end of this season, staff will evaluate all factors for holding games under the lights with the high school staff and set up a procedure for youth sports for next season. Chairperson Ragonese suggested each youth group get one Saturday night game under the lights.

4. High School Facility Referendum.

Mike Hurley told board members that the Town Council will be setting a date in the spring for the referendum to renovate the High School facility

H. Harbor Management Commission.

1. Harbor Management Plan.

Chairperson Ragonese noted that the public comments on the plan were very good. These comments will be incorporated into the plan. A second draft will be mailed to members for their review. Ms. Rachel LeClair sent an email to Ms. Bagley with her thoughts on the plan. Chairperson Ragonese distributed a copy of her suggestions to commission members. They are attached to the minutes.

2. Harbormaster Appointments.

Acting Harbormaster, Charlie Forsdick, reported that the governor's staff is still working on the appointments for Harbormaster and Deputy Harbormaster. Chairperson Ragonese reported that he sent a letter to the governor supporting Mr. Forsdick for Harbormaster.

3. Status of Cove Improvement Projects.

Ms. Bagley reported that the grant has been submitted to the Federal government for the new docks and moorings at the Cove. The permit process for the docks is waiting on the state government to review the soil samples. The Acting Harbormaster has been working with the Yacht Club to remove their moorings from the Cove. He was able to work with them and get 17 moorings pulled. He has two left and is working on a plan to get them removed.

4. Wethersfield Cove Yacht Club Dock Expansion.

Acting Harbormaster, Charlie Forsdick, explained to the commission that the Yacht Club is developing a plan for dock expansion. They will be bringing it to this commission for their review.

I. Motion to Adjourn.

A motion was made by Richard Lepore and seconded by Tom Pentalow to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen A. Bagley, Director  
Parks & Recreation Department